REQUEST FOR REVISION OF THE PART OF THE INTERNATIONAL CODE OF ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE RELATING TO THE FUNCTION OF CONSERVATION OF NAMES. Z.N.(S.) 1734

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It is regrettable that in the 1962 International Code of Zoological Nomenclature the Principle of Conservation (sometimes called the Law of Prescription) is neither defined nor discussed. Concepts of the Principle and its implementation have undergone several modifications since it first appeared in a communication by Dr. H. Lemche (*Bull. Zool. Nomencl.*, **3** : 158–161, 1950), and have involved the following suggested procedures : (1) setting priority aside to avoid replacing well-established and long-used names by senior synonyms that were long overlooked and last printed prior to 1850; (2) referring any disruptive name to the International Commission for a decision concerning its use, and, furthermore, prohibiting its use unless it is sanctioned by the International Commission; (3) retention of long-used names and *rejection* of problematical *or* long-overlooked names; and (4) suppression of long-overlooked names (*nomina oblita*). The last procedure is vague and merely one important facet of the Principle.

Concerning conservation of names, Follett (an unofficial interpretation of the International Rules of Zoological Nomenclature . . ., 1955) discussed the official lists and indices; his definitions indicate that a name conserved (placed on an official list) is to be used in " preference " to *any* other name. Nothing is said concerning two or more conserved names found to be synonyms. Bradley's remarkable official draft of the English text of the International Code (*Bull. Zool. Nomencl.*, **14** : 7–285, 1957) briefly mentions the Principle, lists, and indices, but little is found regarding them in the 1961 and present codes, despite the need for universal clarity of purpose and procedures. Our purpose here is to discuss the process of conservation of names and to suggest emendation to the present code in order to remedy its deficiencies relative to conservation of names.

An officially rejected name is agreed to be of no further consequence to nomenclature, except as individually specified. On the other hand, we *assume* that a conserved name is always by virtue of its appearance on an official list not only itself secure from threat, but is a potential danger to nomenclatural stability merely by its availability through becoming a junior synonym of other, well-established or even conserved names. In fact, the entire role of the official lists of conserved names needs to be re-evaluated inasmuch as conservation of names not only is a threat to other names but may in most cases be circumvented without loss of the desired end of nomenclatural stability by simple suppression of disruptive names. Unbridled augmentation of the official lists appears to us not only unnecessary but also potentially dangerous to stability, in the long run. Obviously, problems that will arise whereby conserved names endanger well-established names could be solved by suppression of the former under the plenary powers; but removal of names from official lists would materially weaken confidence in and function of them as a working tool. Practicality *requires* stability of lists and indices.

Presumably the function of official lists are (1) to conserve names in cases where suppression is not involved, but where for example they may be incorrectly proposed (lacking proper qualifications, such as description, or found in works inconsistently binomial), or where the names would otherwise be reversed in applicability, etc.; and (2) to protect a desired name beyond the specific stipulations of a given case brought before the Commission, that is against future threats which in fact might derive from well-established names. Surely in every case of conservation concomitant with suppression the name proposed for conservation must be judged to be a very useful name, the conservation of which might, for example, be obviously of benefit to general or applied zoology (see Hemming's introductory note, in the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology, 1958). A problem unanticipated by the present Code is the possibility that two conserved names may become synonyms, or that a conserved name may become a junior synonym of a better known but unconserved name. This latter problem is surely intensified by conservation of subspecific names. For the reasons mentioned above, placement of a name on an official list of conserved names therefore should be accomplished only after very close scrutiny by the petitioner and the Commission.

The practice of suppressing threatening names with concomitant conservation of the threatened name is fast becoming customary. In proposals before the Commission we know of one by Glass and Baker (*Bull. Zool. Nomencl.*, **22** (3) : 204–205, 1965) and two by Long (*ibid.*, **21** : 318–320, 370–371, 1964) wherein suppression seems in our present opinion worthwhile, but conservation of the threatened names unnecessary. If the *nomen oblitum* rule were revised so that *nomina oblita* are never available nor ordinarily brought before the Commission the requisite listing and indexing of names by the Commission would be greatly, reduced. Automatic rejection of *nomina oblita* from nomenclature by the taxonomist himself has been practiced by Hoffmeister and Lee (*J. Mamm.*, **44** : 510, 1963); and certainly their procedure, while not strictly in accordance with provisions of the present Code, appears to us to be superior and relatively simple, avoiding delay and needless appeals.

To summarize, we suggest emendation of the Code (1) to define and discuss the Principle of Conservation, which once involved *retention* of *long-established* names as well as *rejection* of *long-overlooked* or forgotten names (the *nomen oblitum* rule does not specify the former); (2) to state that conservation may usually be achieved by rejection of a disruptive name, and need not always require listing of the desired name on an official list; (3) to define and discuss all of the official lists and indices and most certainly to state their functions; (4) to express the need for continued stability of such lists and indices; and (5) to specify the entire procedure from nomenclatural problem to official judgment wherein validity of one of two or more conserved names is established. We further urge that the Commission reject totally or in part all proposals involving conservation of threatened names by placement of the desired name on an official list, except where official conservation is demonstrably essential to achievement of a stable and universal nomenclature.